



# NEWS

Judicial Council of California  
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## Judicial Council Adopts Legislative Proposal on Uniform Civil Fees for State Courts

### *Other Actions Taken on Trial Court Budget and Facilities*

San Francisco—At a public meeting here, the Judicial Council of California today approved a legislative proposal on uniform civil fees for state trial courts. By a unanimous vote the council voted to sponsor legislation that will streamline and simplify the civil fee structure for all those who use California's trial courts.

With a proposed effective date of July 1, 2005, the new fee schedule results from a comprehensive statewide study on court fees directed by Chief Justice Ronald M. George, Chair of the Judicial Council, the policymaking body of the state courts.

If enacted, the new schedule will establish uniform civil fees for the same services in all 58 California counties; help eliminate the current \$17 million deficiency in the trial courts' budget; modestly increase fees but still maintain access to justice in state courts; and ensure predictability because fees will remain unchanged until 2007. The new civil fee schedule may be viewed online at

<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courtadmin/jc/documents/reports/1204item14b.pdf>.

In other action, the 27-member Judicial Council approved in concept a wide-ranging legislative program that will support the council's key priorities for the next several years. Among the concept proposals approved:

- **Trial Court Facilities Bond:** A proposed bond measure for the 2006 ballot that would support the urgent need for the renovation of existing courthouses and the construction of new courthouses throughout California. The measure is designed to ensure public safety and to implement the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002, which transferred court facilities from county ownership to the state.
- **Seismic Issues:** Proposed legislation that would enable the state to accept transfer of trial court facilities with seismic deficiencies by modifying current facility standards.

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## OTHER ACTIONS

The Judicial Council also took the following actions at its December 10 meeting:

- **Trial Court Facilities:** Adopted policies to update the Trial Court Five-Year Capital Outlay Plan, which ranks the order of 201 proposed facilities projects for the California courts. The changes will give superior courts more flexibility by allowing them to reorder their facility projects within their own counties. The updates also move 8 demonstration projects back to the ranked list at their original ranking.
- **Electronic Court Records:** Accepted a progress report on electronic access to trial court records in California. The report found that courts have begun to provide, to the extent feasible, access to electronic trial court documents under 2001 court rules. The report recommended that the council's Court Technology Advisory Committee continue to monitor experience in this area.
- **Budget Act of 2004:** Authorized allocation of funding for trial court staff negotiated salary increases and benefit increases and contract security salary and benefit increases, as provided in the Budget Act of 2004.
- **Budget Guidelines:** Approved revisions to the *Operating Guidelines and Directives for Budget Management in the Judicial Branch* to reflect dynamic changes in the courts' budget process and respond to courts' requests for more flexibility in meeting these policies.
- **Trial Court Improvement Fund:** Approved a new methodology for allocating 80 percent of the amount of fee, fine, and forfeiture revenue deposited in the Trial Court Improvement Fund for any fiscal year that exceeds the amount received in fiscal year 2002–2003.
- **Court-Appointed Counsel:** Approved allocation of available funds from the Trial Court Trust Fund to reimburse expenditures for court-appointed counsel in fiscal years 2002–2003 and 2003–2004 that exceed the base funding amount allocated for court-appointed counsel services in juvenile dependency proceedings.
- **Homicide Trials/Prisoner Costs:** Approved guidelines to establish trial court reimbursement of extraordinary costs associated with homicide trials and costs of prisoner hearings.

To read complete reports considered by the council, please go to this link:  
<http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courtadmin/jc/documents/age1204.pdf>.

*The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.*

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